

TITLE: Report to the California State Legislature, in Accord with Assembly Concurrent Resolution 67, 1969 Legislative Session, Wakefield

DATE: January 1971

AUTHOR(S): California Department of Motor Vehicles

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FUNDING SOURCE: Departmental Budget

PROJECT OBJECTIVE:

To comply with Assembly Concurrent Resolution 67, (1960 Legislative Session) by conducting a pilot study of the effects of waiving the knowledge test for renewal applicants.

SUMMARY:

Initial Report

This study investigated two test waiver paradigms: (1) blanket waiver of the written knowledge test for all renewals, irrespective of driving record, and (2) limited test waiver for drivers with clean prior driving records. The original 1971 legislative report, finding no evidence of a significant impact on subsequent accidents, recommended that neither of the test waiver programs be implemented at that time. This recommendation was largely based on the fact that any cost savings resulting from eliminating the written test would be extremely small.

Follow-up Report

As mentioned in the 1971 report, the use of a longer follow-up period and the search for significant differences among subpopulations of drivers were to be explored in a future report. This additional (unpublished) analysis confirmed the conclusions reached in the prior study, with the following exceptions:

1. While reward in the form of a congratulatory acknowledgment letter plus a waiver of the written knowledge test still tended to increase the probability that a good driver would maintain a conviction-free driving record, its positive effect on subsequent conviction frequency was no longer statistically significant. This suggested that the original effect was transitory, dissipating after six months.
2. Reward in the form of an acknowledgment letter alone significantly decreased the probability of a good driver's remaining accident-free in some subgroups. Young married drivers who received, only acknowledgment letters had more than twice as many accidents as did their counterparts in both the letter-waiver and control groups. Older single drivers in the letter-only group had nearly three times the number of accidents as did their counterparts in the letter-waiver group. Although the accident rate for older single drivers receiving the congratulatory letter alone was almost twice that of the control group, this difference was not significant.
3. The negative cost-benefit figures reported in the original study were no longer applicable, since a changed renewal notice process allowed for the mailing of additional materials (reward letter, etc.) without additional postage cost.

The original and follow-up studies warrant the following conclusions:

1. The reward waiver program did not reduce accidents and, in light of more recent studies (Report #60, Harrington & Ratz, 1978) would not present sufficient cost savings to warrant

implementation in the form evaluated here.

2. There was no evidence from the studies to show that the written test had traffic safety value; however, the study design did not address either the motivational impact the test may have had in causing drivers to prepare for it, or the long-range effects its elimination might have.

IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Department accepted the recommendation that neither program be implemented.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A summary of the follow-up analysis "An analysis of two test waiver strategies for renewing driver licenses" by Kuan et al. was presented at the April, 1982 meeting of the Western Psychological Association, Sacramento, CA.